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## Lord Salisbury's Primrose League Speech.

While Senator Lodge and Secretary Root on this side have been manipulating doctrines, canals and foreign settlements to promote military and naval extension, Lord Salisbury has been shrewdly doing something of like character in England. Those who desire to find grounds for larger military and naval preparations never fail to discover something at hand which can be adroitly turned to their purpose.

Lord Salisbury's Primrose League speech on May 9 was a most extraordinary deliverance, from whatever point of view we look at it. The thrust at Ireland, so soon after the Queen's visit, seems at first thought wholly unaccountable. But if his purpose is kept in view, this part of the speech is easy of interpretation. It is of a piece with the rest. Military development—and that is what the Prime Minister was seeking to promote—feeds on suspicion and hatred. In order to induce Englishmen to put forth extra efforts to increase their fighting strength and preparation, they must be made to feel that there is danger all around. Irish dislike of England must therefore not be allowed to die out. Britishers must be kept in dread of an invasion from across the Irish channel, in case some powerful enemy should fall upon England and give the wearers of the Shamrock their chance of revenge. If only they had an opportunity, they would do as the Transvaalers have done. Therefore they must be kept down, allowed no sort of home rule, and all Englishmen must train themselves to shoot straight at them, if they should ever attempt to gain their ends by throwing in their lot with any of her Majesty's numerous enemies. This is really the sense of the Irish passage in the speech. The English papers might well have used a much stronger word about it than "indiscretion." Only a Tory imperialist could have allowed himself an utterance so heartless, and at the same time so stupid and so unfitted to lessen any danger conceivable from Ireland.

On the European side the Prime Minister sees, or pretends to see, dangers enough to keep every Englishman awake o' nights with a Lee-Metford at his bedside. "The elements and causes of menace and peril are slowly accumulating." "They may accumulate to such a point as to require our earnest and most active efforts to repel them." There is over there "a great prejudice against this country." "Who knows but that all these things may be united in one great wave to dash upon our shores?" Hence the people must be induced "to voluntarily put themselves in a position to defend their homes and country."

When one goes on to read that rifle clubs are the means by which this approaching multitudinous danger is to be prepared against, one can scarcely refrain from laughing outright. But stopping to

think, one sees behind the rifle clubs something else. The Tory leader knows that the nation will not now tolerate conscription. So he wishes to set all Englishmen to shooting at marks, hoping in time by this means to remove their objections to enforced military service. He knows very well that to meet an invasion by the trained and highly organized armies of Europe something more than mere riflemen would be necessary. He knows, too, that British imperialism, growing and spreading as it is, cannot be much longer supported by the voluntary system. Conscription he sees to be absolutely necessary to this policy, and hence his attempt to manufacture a gigantic scare, to set all Englishmen to training in a pleasing way, hoping thus to bring the nation to accept in time what he does not now, at the behest of the militarist party, dare to propose and try to push through Parliament. But this is the end in view, and let all lovers of English liberty beware.

There is no doubt that there is some ground for England to fear the dreadful things which Lord Salisbury has portrayed, with a fervor unusual in his cool, passionless blood. But there is not one-tenth the cause for alarm that he imagines. There is not the remotest prospect of a tidal wave of invasion from Europe. If the European nations had any such intent, they have had their opportunity during the last six months. Whatever danger there is, is of England's own making, and such speeches as that at the Primrose League are unfortunately among the most powerful agencies in increasing it. Irish dislike of England, which was dying away, has been kindled into new life by it, and European feelings have certainly not been mollified.

The Prime Minister pretends to be unable to explain the continental "root of bitterness against England." Is he really ignorant of it? Many of his fellow countrymen in both private and public life can explain it. Every impartial observer outside of England understands perfectly well its causes. It is not because of England's civil and religious institutions, founded in the principles of freedom and justice, nor of her moral and material greatness so far as they spring from these. These institutions, this progress, the good which she has done in her colonies, have an increasing number of admirers all over the Continent, both in private and official circles. You cannot travel on the other side of the channel without hearing constantly the frankest appreciation of them.

The cause of the root of bitterness is England's contradiction of herself through her increasingly ambitious imperialistic policy; her fixed, relentless determination to push her empire into every quarter of the globe, wherever she can find or make an opening; her seizing and holding the lands of the weak and uncivilized peoples regardless of the rights of the native races, and sometimes in violation of sacred promises; the threatening development and extension

of her war-fleet over all the waters of the earth, into the closest possible proximity to other countries. This policy, carried forward through a subtle, domineering and frequently conscienceless diplomacy, brings her into disrepute with all the better liberty-loving classes of Europe. It brings her into rivalry and conflict with the powers having similar policies and ambitions. In this way she arouses the indignation of the good, and the jealousy and hatred of the evil-minded. So long as she continues in this course, she will continue to reap its consequences — in an accumulating harvest.

In the attempt to uphold this policy, to clothe it in the garb of righteousness, to artfully entice the British people to accept all its ultimate demands, to cover up its weaknesses and dangers, to throw upon others the blame of its coming evil results, this last speech of Salisbury's has gone farther than any previous British imperialistic utterance. The whole blind, selfish, deceptive, ruinous spirit of imperialism and militarism is in every passage of it. And the pity of it is that it was uttered at the very moment when England's ears were most inclined to hear.

### **Mission of the Boer Envoys.**

So far as the mission of the Boer envoys to this country is purely in the interests of peace, to bring the moral power of American public opinion to bear upon Great Britain to induce her to stop the war and to respect the national rights of the two republics, it has our utmost sympathy. The injustice of England's conduct in pursuing such a course as to bring on the war, and in proposing to extinguish the independence of the republics, has had no severer condemnation than in these columns. We used our best efforts, small though they were, to bring about mediation by this government. We still believe that the government, under the Hague Convention provisions, ought to have made a much more serious effort in this direction than it did. It ought, independently of any request from either of the parties, to have voluntarily proposed mediation to both of them, giving its reasons why as a friendly neutral it felt that hostilities ought to cease. The moral effect of such a course would have been much greater than the mere tender of good offices on request from one of the parties. If all the nations signatory of the Hague Convention could have been brought to offer mediation jointly, we do not believe the English government could have resisted this united appeal of the civilized world in behalf of peace.

But *intervention* in favor of the Boers against England is a very different thing. Intervention always involves resort to arms, in case request is not complied with. In this case, it would be absolutely certain to result in war. The Boer envoys think that the mere utterance by this country of the word, "Stop the war!" would bring England to halt.

Quite the contrary is our judgment. In the present state of British opinion and war preparation at home and in the colonies the utterance of such a word would unleash all the English dogs of war. There would be such a struggle to the death as few generations have ever seen. The border between us and Canada would be a line of blood and horror. The war ships of the two nations would go to the bottom of the ocean in deadly grapple. The great commerce of the world, so largely British and American, would be destroyed. Suffering and distress unparalleled would be witnessed.

No one can picture faintly what the awfulness of the struggle would be between two such powers. Great, therefore, as is the wound to civilization which the South African War has caused, and iniquitous as it has been, infinitely more iniquitous and destructive to civilization would be a war between these two countries. To try to stop the smaller iniquity by commission of the immensely greater one would be the very acme of madness.

The motives which induce our government to abstain from intervention may not be our motives, may not be the highest, may be in part honorable, in part selfish, cowardly and politically base. Of that we do not attempt to judge here. But that the government ought to abstain on the highest ethical and humanitarian grounds seems to us entirely clear. The method of overcoming evil with evil stands condemned on every page of history. It is not encouraging that such multitudes of men still insist vindictively on using it with all its material hazards and moral degradations.

There are plenty of risks of war between this country and England, without using the natural sympathy of the nation for the Boers to multiply them. It will take the constant and most earnest efforts of all the friends of righteousness and peace in both countries to keep them from some day coming to a deadly clash. The imperialistic sentiments and policies which they are now so deeply plunged into may for the moment make them "cronies," but the motives and methods of imperialism have nothing in them tending to create true friendship and concord. On the contrary, if these policies are not abandoned, Boer and Filipino will not be the last to suffer from them. Briton and American, in the pursuit of their expansive ambitions, will some day come to a point where they cannot both have their way, when one or the other will have to give back. Then will come the dire conflict. The only way in which it can be avoided, so far as we can see, is in the abandonment of the whole imperialist spirit, root and branch.

Here is the point at which the friends of righteousness and peace can work most effectively. They ought to do all in their power, by every possible moral means, to induce the cessation of wars now going on and the settlement of the questions involved